

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 PORT M 01476 180511Z  
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 ACDA-12 MCT-01 IO-13 /086 W  
-----073954 180515Z /17

R 170615Z OCT 77

FM AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2713  
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA  
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA  
AMEMBASSY SUVA  
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON  
CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT MORESBY 1476

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINS PINT PP  
SUBJ: DIRO ROW WIDENS

REF: A) PORT MORESBY 1382 (NOTAL), B) PORT MORESBY 1437

1. SUMMARY: KEY OPPOSITION LEADERS PAVE FOLLOWED UP THE REPRIMAND OF PNG DEFENCE FORCE COMMANDER DIRO AND THE OCT 12 REPRIMAND OF THE NATION'S SECOND-RANKING POLICE OFFICER WITH CALLS FOR INVESTIGATIONS OF POLITICAL MANIPULATION OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE, THE POLICE AND THE DEFENCE FORCE. PERSONAL RIVALRIES AND EVEN THE ISSUE OF TREATMENT OF PAPUANS HAVE COME INTO PLAY. WHILE WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE SOMARE GOVERNMENT IS IN JEOPARDY, IT DOES FACE SOME POTENTIALLY DAMAGING TIMES WHEN PARLIAMENT RECONVENES ON NOV 7. END SUMMARY.

2. OPPOSITION LEADERS HAVE NOW GONE BEYOND THE REPRIMAND  
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OF PNG DEFENCE FORCE COMMANDER DIRO TO ACCUSE THE GOVERNMENT OF POLITICAL MANIPULATION OF NOT ONLY THE DEFENCE FORCE BUT ALSO THE POLICE AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE. AN ACCUMULATION OF EVENTS HAS TRIGGERED THE ACCUSATIONS. ON OCT 12, FOLLOWING THE DIRO INCIDENT, POLICE MINISTER LOWA ANNOUNCED THAT HE HAD REPRIMANDED DEPUTY POLICE COMMISSIONER MERIRE AND THAT MERIRE WOULD BE TRANSFERRED OUT OF THE POLICE FORCE.

POLICE COMMISSIONER KEREPIA, A LONG-TIME RIVAL OF MERIRE, HAD RECOMMENDED THAT MERIRE BE FIRED FOR DISOBEYING DIRECT ORDERS.

3. THE INCREASED OPPOSITION ATTACKS ON THE GPNG HAVE BEEN BOTH GENERAL AND SPECIFIC. INFLUENTIAL FORMER GOVERNOR GENERAL, SIR JOHN UISE, CHARGED EARLIER THIS WEEK THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS UNDER A CLOUD OF SUSPICION, STATED THAT A NEW NATIONAL ELECTION SHOULD BE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED AT THE END OF THE YEAR AND CALLED FOR A ROYAL COMMISSION TO LOOK INTO POLITICAL MANIPULATION OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE, POLICE AND DEFENCE FORCES. OPPOSITION LEADER SIR TEI ABAL ON OCT 15 CALLED FOR AN INDEPENDENT INQUIRY TO LOOK INTO THE REPRIMANDS OF THE TWO SENIOR OFFICERS.

4. MUCH OF THE OPPOSITION'S CRITICISM HAS CENTERED ON POLICE MINISTER LOWA. EQUALLY CRITICAL OF LOWA IS DEFENCE MINISTER MONA, A DIRO SUPPORTER. LOWA, A FORMER DEFENCE FORCE COLONEL AND RIVAL OF DIRO'S, INITIALLY WAS UNDER FIRE FOR HAVING MADE PUBLIC STATEMENTS ABOUT DIRO AND THE DEFENCE FORCE WHICH ARE OUTSIDE HIS JURISDICTION. NOW THE OPPOSITION IS QUESTIONING WHY LOWA DID NOT FIRE MERIRE (HIS CLOSE FRIEND) RATHER THAN SIMPLY REPRIMANDING AND TRANSFERRING HIM, MOVES WHICH LEAVE OPEN THE POSSIBILITY OF HIS RETURNING TO THE POLICE AS COMMISSIONER WHEN THE TERM OF COMMISSIONER KEREPIA EXPIRES NEXT MONTH.

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5. ADDING FUEL TO THE FIRE, PAPUA BESENA'S DYNAMIC MP JOSEPHINE ABAIJAH INJECTED THE ISSUE OF ALLEGED MISTREATMENT OF PAPUANS BY THE GOVERNMENT. MISS ABAIJAH PLAYED THIS EMOTIONAL THEME BY STATING THAT THE ISSUE WAS ONE OF AN INSECURE AND FEARFUL GOVERNMENT DEALING UNFAIRLY WITH PAPUANS DIRO AND MONA.

6. AS IS OBVIOUS, THE ISSUES BEING RAISED ARE SERIOUS, EMOTIONAL AND INVOLVED SOME VERY SHARP PERSONAL RIVALRIES. WHILE WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE SOMARE GOVERNMENT IS IN ANY IMMEDIATE DANGER, IT DOES FACE A DIFFICULT AND POTENTIALLY EMBARRASSING TIME WHEN PARLIAMENT RECONVENES ON NOV 7.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Reference:** 77 PORT MORESBY 1382, 77 PORT MORESBY 1437  
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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
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